

Department of Public Health  
and Human Services

Section:  
APPLICATION PROCESSING

TANF CASH ASSISTANCE

Subject:  
Processing

**Supersedes:** TANF 103-5 (07/01/07)

**References:** ARM 37.78.101, .102, .226 - .228 and .424

GENERAL RULE—All completed ‘Application for Assistance’ (HCS-250) and ‘Reapplication Addendum’ (HCS-249) forms must be processed and eligibility determined in a timely manner.

During the application processing period, TEAMS case notes must be entered documenting the interview and any processing delays.

## **PROCESSING TIME FRAMES**

An application is valid for **30** calendar days following the application date. The eligibility determination - approval or denial - must be completed within this 30-day time period. This time limitation serves to protect the applicant’s right to receive benefits in a timely manner.

**NOTE:** The day following the application date is the start of the 30-day period. (This follows FS policy)

If there is a delay of processing beyond 30 days due to the actions of a third party that is beyond the control of the Eligibility Case Manager and/or the applicant/participant, the processing time frames may extend beyond 30 days, if approved by a supervisor in regular TANF cases or by Central Office in extended benefit cases. A TEAMS case note must be entered explaining the reason for the delay.

## **START DATE OF BENEFITS**

The start date of benefits depends in part on whether or not the assistance unit includes individuals who are required to negotiate a Family Investment Agreement (FIA) and be referred to either Tribal NEW or the WoRC Program for case management services.

**NOTE:** All applicants must be informed of the requirement to complete an interview with the Eligibility Case Manager; negotiate a FIA/EP, if appropriate; and must be informed that if they are referred to WoRC, benefits will be pro-rated based on the date they negotiate the EP with the WoRC Case Manager. (TANF 103-2)

If the household includes one or more individuals who are required to negotiate a Family Investment Agreement (FIA), the start date of benefits will be the date of application as long as the following criteria are met:

1. The individual(s) who is required to negotiate a FIA has done so and is referred to the Tribal NEW program for case management services; or
2. The individual(s) who is required to negotiate a FIA has done so and is referred to the WoRC Program for case management services and;
  - a. Has negotiated an Employability Plan (EP) with WoRC for the application month within three (3) working days of being referred to the WoRC Program; or
  - b. Has good cause (TANF 1509-1) for failing to negotiate an EP with WoRC for the application month within three (3) working days of being referred to WoRC and enrolls as soon as possible.



**NOTE:** The three (3) working day “count” begins the date following the date the WRC component is entered on the EMPL screen by the OPA Eligibility Case Manager. This triggers an alert to the WoRC RELI screen.

If the individual(s) who is referred to the WoRC Program for case management services does **not** meet the criteria above, the start date of benefits will be the date the individual(s) negotiates an EP with WoRC.

In cases where more than one individual is referred to the WoRC Program for case management services, the start date of benefits will be the latter of the application date or the date that **all** required members have negotiated the EP.

If the household does **not** include an individual who is required to negotiate a FIA, (e.g., SSI recipient parent or Grandmother applying for TANF for grandchildren only) the start date of benefits will be the date of application.

**Example:** Bertha applies for TANF for her two grandchildren age 2 and 4 on 8/6/07 and completes her interview the same day. Bertha does not wish to receive TANF for herself. The application is processed using the application date of 8/6/07 and the start date of 8/6/07 on APMA. Benefits would be prorated from 8/6/07—8/31/07.

#### OPA ELIGIBILITY INTERVIEW

A delay in completing the mandatory eligibility interview with the OPA Eligibility Case Manager, will **not** impact the start date of benefits. The start date of benefits is contingent on the household composition, the date

of the case management referral for Tribal NEW, or if referred to WoRC, the date the EP is negotiated with WoRC, with or without good cause.

**NOTE:** The OPA must attempt to provide a same day interview to all TANF applicants, regardless of time clock status. If the household does not complete a same day interview; the OPA must send TEAMS notice A032 "TANF Interview Scheduled" to the applicant. (TANF 103-2)

**► START DATE  
OF WRC  
COMPONENT**

The OPA Eligibility Case Manager will set the start date of the WRC component on EMPL as the date the individual negotiates their Family Investment Agreement (FIA) and is referred to WoRC for case management services.



If there is a delay between the date of application and the date of the eligibility interview and referral to WoRC, participation in allowable work activities must be reconstructed by the WoRC Case Manager, if possible. If activities cannot be reconstructed, as a last resort, the WoRC Case Manager would use the HNC component code for the time period between the first day of the month and the date they negotiate the Employability Plan (EP). (TANF 701-3)

**GOOD CAUSE**

If the household has good cause for failing to comply with a non-financial eligibility requirement and they are making a good faith effort to comply, the individual is coded 'DQ' until they are able to comply or the good faith effort stops. An eligibility determination is made for the remaining household members if all necessary information is provided.

**NOTE:** This does not apply to households who are applying for extended benefits. Extended benefits cannot be approved for any members of the household until eligibility is established for all required household members.

If the individual who is coded 'DQ' is a work-eligible individual who is required to negotiate a Family Investment Agreement/Employability Plan (FIA/EP), benefits for the remaining household members cannot be issued until this eligibility requirement is met. Benefits in the initial month will be pro-rated based on the start date of benefits.

**EXAMPLE:** Mom and two children apply for TANF on 8/14/07. Mom is not able to provide proof of citizenship. She was born in Ohio and has sent off a request for a birth certificate. All other information necessary to determine eligibility is provided. Mom is coded 'DQ' on SEPA but since she is a work-eligible individual, she must negotiate a FIA/EP prior to benefits being issued for the remainder of the household.

She negotiates her FIA on 8/14/07 and is referred to WoRC on that day. She negotiates her EP on 8/15/07. Since the remaining household members are eligible for assistance, and Mom negotiated her EP within three working days of being referred to WoRC; benefits are pro-rated from 8/14/07 – 8/31/07.

If Mom turns in her birth certificate within 30 days of application she is added to the assistance unit and benefits are supplemented from 8/14/07 – 8/31/07. If Mom turns in her birth certificate after the 30-day window, she is added to the assistance unit the first day of the following month.

#### PRO-RATED TEAMS PROCESS

The OPA Eligibility Case Manager may need to manually update the start date of the application on TEAMS APMA screen, **depending on the start date of benefits.**

When the WoRC Case Manager completes the negotiation process with the individual(s) required to negotiate an EP, the EMPS screen will be authorized by the WoRC Case Manager. **This authorization must be done on the same day the EP is negotiated.**

A new GOOD CAUSE field has been added to the EMPS screen and will display for the initial month of TANF benefits. If the date of the WoRC authorization on EMPS is less than three (3) working days from the date the individual(s) was referred to WoRC, this field will be protected.

If the date of the WoRC authorization on EMPS is more than three (3) working days from the date the individual(s) was referred to WoRC, the WoRC Case Manager must enter a 'Y' or 'N' in this field to indicate whether or not good cause exists for the individual(s) failing to negotiate their EP within the three (3) working days.

When the WoRC Case Manager authorizes on EMPS, one of the following alerts will be sent to the OPA Eligibility Case Manager:

1. If the authorization is within three (3) working days of referral:

*"EP AUTH'D XX/XX/XX FOR X/XX, START DATE CORRECT"*

2. If the authorization is not within three (3) working days of referral, but the WoRC Case Manager has indicated good cause exists ('Y' in the GOOD CAUSE field):

*"EP AUTH'D XX/XX/XX FOR X/XX, GOOD CAUSE FOUND"*

3. If the authorization is not within three (3) working days of referral and the WoRC Case Manager has indicated good cause does not exist ('N' in the GOOD CAUSE field):

*“EP AUTH'D XX/XX/XX FOR X/XX, UPDATE START DATE”*

If the alert indicates that the start date is correct or that good cause has been found, the start date on APMA will remain the same as the application date on APMA.

If the alert indicates that the start date must be updated, the start date on APMA must be updated to be the date the WoRC Case Manager authorized on EMPS. This is the date in the alert text.

**A TEAMS case note must be entered by both the WoRC Case Manager and the OPA Case Manager indicating the application date and start date and, if they are different, an explanation for the difference.**

#### **START DATE EXAMPLES:**

Note—all examples apply to regular and extended TANF applications.

**Example 1:** Mom and 2 children apply for TANF cash assistance on 8/6/07. Mom is required to negotiate a FIA and does so on 8/6/07. The family resides in an area served by Tribal NEW and Mom is referred to Tribal NEW for case management services. The application is processed using the application date of 8/6/07 and the start date of 8/6/07 on APMA. Benefits will be pro-rated from 8/6/07 – 8/31/07.

**Example 2:** Dad, Mom and 2 children apply for TANF cash assistance on Wednesday, 10/3/07. Mom and Dad are both required to negotiate a FIA. They do so on Thursday, 10/4/07 and are referred to WoRC for case management on 10/4/07. Dad and Mom both negotiate their Employability Plans (EP) with the WoRC case manager on Wednesday, 10/10/07. Because they negotiated the EP within three **working** days of referral, (Monday 10/8/07 is a holiday) the application is processed using the application date of 10/3/07 and the start date of 10/3/07 on APMA. Benefits will be pro-rated from 10/3/07 – 10/31/07.

**Example 3:** Dad, Mom and 3 children apply for TANF cash assistance on 8/13/07. Dad and Mom are both required to negotiate a FIA. They do so on 8/13/07 during a same day interview and are referred to WoRC for case management on 8/13/07. Mom negotiates an EP with the WoRC case manager on

8/13/07 but Dad indicates he will not stay and does not negotiate an EP until 8/20/07. At the negotiation on 8/20/07, he states he is unable to verify good cause for failing to negotiate an EP within three **working** days of referral. The WoRC Case Manager places an 'N' in the GOOD CAUSE field on EMPS. Because of this delay in negotiation, without good cause, the application is processed using the application date of 8/13/07 and a start date of **8/20/07** on APMA. Benefits for the entire household will be pro-rated from 8/20/07 – 8/31/07.

**Example 4:** Dad, Mom and 2 children apply for TANF cash assistance on Monday, 8/13/07. Dad and Mom are both required to negotiate a FIA. They do so on 8/13/07 during a same day interview and are referred to WoRC for case management on 8/13/07. Mom negotiates her EP with WoRC on Tuesday, 8/14/07 but at the interview indicates that Dad has been called in to work at his part-time job. He will be working 8:00 am until 5:00 pm through Friday, 8/17/07, covering for another employee. The WoRC Case Manager schedules an appointment for Dad to negotiate his EP on Monday, 8/20/07 and requests that Dad provide verification to prove good cause for failing to negotiate the EP within 3 working days of referral.

On 8/20/07 Dad attends the appointment, negotiates his EP and provides a copy of his timesheet for the days he was working. The WoRC Case Manager authorizes the EMPS screen on 8/20/07 and places a 'Y' in the GOOD CAUSE field on EMPS to indicate there is good cause for not negotiating the EP within 3 working days. Because there **is good cause** or the delay in negotiation, the application is processed using the application date of 8/13/07 and a start date of **8/13/07** on APMA. Benefits will be pro-rated from 8/13/07 – 8/31/07.

**Example 5:** Mom and 2 children apply for TANF on 9/4/07. Mom is offered a same day interview, but refuses, stating she has another appointment. The OPA sends TEAMS notice A032 "TANF Interview Scheduled" to Mom on 9/4/07. On 9/6/07, Mom fails to appear for her scheduled interview, but calls and reschedules for 9/10/07.

Mom attends the interview on 9/10/07 and is required to negotiate a FIA. She does so and is referred to WoRC for case management services on 9/10/07. Mom negotiates her EP with WoRC that same day, 9/10/07. Because she has

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negotiated her EP within three (3) working days of referral to WoRC, the application is processed using the application date of 9/4/07 and the start date of **9/4/07** on APMA. The WoRC Case Manager must attempt to reconstruct allowable work activities for the time period between 9/4/07 (date of application) and 9/10/07 (date of negotiation interview) or use the **HNC** code as a last resort.

#### **OUT OF STATE/ TRIBAL TANF MONTHS**

When the applicant indicates he/she has moved to Montana from another state or from an out of state Tribal TANF area; or indicates they have received Tribal TANF benefits while living in Montana, the Eligibility Case Manager must verify assistance has terminated (or is not currently being received) in that state/tribe by either requesting a copy of the applicant's closure notice or contacting the other state/tribe directly. If assistance has been received in the other state/tribe in the application month, the income should be entered on the UNIN screen as 'AP'.

OPA must complete Form FA-100, "Out-Of-State TANF Benefit Verification Request" and submit to **Carol Carpenter, Central Office** for out-of-state inquiries for TANF time-limited benefits anytime an applicant indicates he/she received TANF in another state or Tribal TANF area, or there is reason to believe benefits may have been received out of state. If assistance was received in the application month, note on the FA-100 that benefits were received in the other state and Montana in the same month. That month will not be entered for the other state.

**NOTE:** If there is a possibility that the household has received close to 60 months of TANF assistance, do an immediate referral to Carol Carpenter for an out of state inquiry. Please mark "URGENT" on the referral form and/or send an email to Carol Carpenter requesting this be given a priority.

#### **AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE**

An authorized representative may be designated to act on the behalf of the minor child(ren) and the specified caretaker relative(s) with whom the child is living. This representative may or may not be a member of the filing/assistance unit. The representative must be designated in writing by a specified caretaker relative or other responsible member of the filing/assistance unit and must be aware of relevant information and the family's circumstances.

**NOTE:** An authorized representative is not the same thing as a protective payee. For the protective payee policy, see TANF 104-2.

If the caretaker relative is not competent and thus unable to sign the application, another competent adult filing unit member may sign it. In the

absence of a competent adult filing unit member, a legal guardian must sign. If there is no legal guardian, the authorized representative may sign the application and other pertinent documents and TEAMS Case Notes (CANO) must substantiate why the caretaker relative did not sign the required documents.

The authorized representative will be required to present all required information and verification requested.

#### **ADDING OR REMOVING A HOUSEHOLD MEMBER AT APPLICATION**

If the application **is still pending** at the time a new required filing unit member is reported, the additional required filing unit member should be added effective the date of application. The Adding a Household member form (HCS-261A) must be used to gather the necessary information on the new household member if that individual is an adult.

#### **EXAMPLE 1:**

Application dated 9/4/07 includes Mom, child age 4, unborn and father of the unborn (not father of other child). Assistance unit would include Mom and 4 year old child. Mom is a work eligible individual and is referred to WoRC for case management on 9/5/07. She negotiates her EP with WoRC that same day. However the TANF application is pending because all the information necessary to determine eligibility is not provided. A request for additional information notice has been sent. Mom reports on 9/12/07 that she had the baby on 9/10/07. Since the application is still pending, the assistance unit now would include Mom, 4 year old, new baby and father of the new baby.

Application date would be 9/4/07 for all members; however the start date of benefits for all household members will depend on whether or not the father of the new baby is a work eligible individual and required to negotiate a FIA/EP, the date he is referred to WoRC and the date he negotiates an EP with the WoRC Case Manager. (Refer to "Start Date of Benefits" section on page 2.)

#### **EXAMPLE 2:**

Application dated 8/10/07 includes Dad and his two sons, age 4 and 6. Assistance unit would include Dad and two children. Dad is a work eligible individual and is referred to Tribal NEW for case management on 8/10/07. However the TANF application is pending because Dad needs to provide birth certificates for the children. A request for additional information notice has been sent. On 8/14/07 Dad reports that the mother of the children has returned to the household. Since the application is still pending, the assistance unit now would include Dad, the two children and Mom. Mom is also a work eligible individual and is also referred to Tribal NEW for case management services.



Application date would be 8/10/07 for all household members. The start date of benefits would also be 8/10/07 since Tribal NEW will be providing case management services to both work eligible individuals. (Refer to "Start Date of Benefits" section on page 2.)

**NOTE:** All financial and non-financial eligibility criteria must be verified and documented for each new household member, as outlined in TANF 103-4.

If the application **is still pending** at the time it is reported that a required filing unit member has moved out of the household, remove the member the date of application.

**NOTE:** There might be income in the form of contributions from the household member who has moved out of the home.

If the application **has been processed**, follow the adding/removing members guidelines in TANF 201-3.

## **VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL**

The household may voluntarily withdraw its application prior to a determination of eligibility. Voluntary withdrawal means that the applicant, on his/her own initiative, has contacted the county office, either orally or in writing, and requested processing of the application stop.

The Eligibility Case Manager will document the reason for withdrawal, if one is given or known (TEAMS Screen CANO), and send a notice to the applicant to confirm the request. Use TEAMS Denial Code: WDR. The application form must be retained by the county office. Send TEAMS notice X260.

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